

THE
RIGHTS
OF
DISSENTERS
FROM THE
ESTABLISHED CHURCH,

IN RELATION, PRINCIPALLY, TO ENGLISH
CATHOLICS.

By the Rev. JOSEPH BERINGTON.

Communem hunc ergo populum, paribusque regamus
Auspiciis.

Virg.

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THE
R. I. G. H. T. S.

D. I. S. C. I. P. L. I. N. E.

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IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



W. L. G. T. O. N.

To — —, Esq.

SIR,

THE subject, which, some months ago, engaged our attention, I have since, sometimes, reconsidered; and the impression it seemed to make on your own mind, must have often recalled it to your thoughts. While our conversation lasted, the stillness of the evening-scene was such, that the mind naturally harmonised with it; and it is in such moments, that we listen with most attention, and speak with most effect. You applauded my general reasoning, and you recommended it to me to arrange my reflections, and to publish them. It was my intention: but events, you know, of the greatest national concern, soon afterwards, succeeded, which engrossed the public thoughts. The honest firmness with which you combated my ideas, and the ingenuous display of what, you said, might be the prejudices of your education, did honour to
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your character; at the same time, that they urged me to press my arguments more confidently. Who lightly surrenders his opinion, shews that he has either no settled system of thought, or that truth and falsehood are indifferent to him; whilst the concession of one moment is often resumed in the next. There are characters, on the other hand, so stubbornly cemented, that no arguments can convince, no evidence move. To contend with these is folly, and a triumph over those brings no glory with it.

Our conversation arose from mention having been made of the *Revolution*, the centenary commemoration of which event was then designed to be celebrated. I observed, that I could cordially join in that celebrity: and while every feature of your countenance seemed to express hesitation and surprise, I briefly detailed my motives, founded on the obvious maxims of my political creed. That creed, you thought, was peculiar to myself. I replied, that it was common to all those of the society, to which I belonged, who had ever thought on the
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the subject. This introduced a variety of matter, more or less connected with the leading question, which I shall state in the following pages.

We discoursed on the general character of human *prejudices*, which seemed to me often to spring from sources, of which the mind was not itself sensible; but which, growing with its growth, so formed to it, as to become a permanent affection, not removeable, at a certain age, but by a process of perseverant attention, too laborious and irksome, to be pursued by many. I said, that the growth of *prejudice* might be compared with that of the mishapen letters which a rustic, with the point of his knife, marks upon the tender rind of a sapling tree. They are, at first, hardly visible, but when years have elapsed, and he returns to view his old haunts, with what surprise does his eye catch the initials of his name, deep and broad, as if cut by a ponderous instrument? So it is with the early impressions on our minds; and, as I have often remarked, those seem to be of the most adhesive and luxuri-

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ant quality, which have the least of truth and nature in them. You assented to the observation, and asked me to solve the problem. I referred you to the field, through which our walk lay, where, though the hand of culture had not been idle, weeds of a noxious quality forced their way, struck their roots deepest, and threatened to choke the tender blade which the husbandman was just then viewing with an anxious solicitude. The process of nature through the frame of every being is similar, and the God of nature thereby tells us, that man must labour, would he draw a wholesome plenty, from the soil of the earth, or from the more noble field of his own mind. — *Prejudice* I defined to be a judgment or opinion lightly assumed.

It was then, that you so ingenuously described to me the circumstances of your first education, its subsequent progress, and the peculiar opinions, which, seeming to have risen with you from the cradle, had attached themselves to your mind, and gained strength in its every evolution. As
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the portrait, in its principal lines, will represent many as faithfully, as if themselves had sitten to the pencil, you must permit me to sketch it. And as in it there is no real malevolence, no real bigotry, no real intolerance, no real fanaticism; how easily will the eye distinguish it from every form, wherein those horrid features are all prominent, and all substantial.

Your family, you said, from long recollection, had stood foremost in defence of monarchy, of Episcopacy, and of the Protestant interest. It had suffered with the crown and mitre under Cromwell; had revived at the Restoration; and had conspired, though with some reluctance, to bring round the Revolution, in 1688, which, in its consequences, had proved most glorious. Since that period, it had uniformly professed the same principles, more inclined, you owned, to *Toryism*, than to, what you termed, the too democratic tenets of the *whiggish* school. From your earliest infancy, as far back, at least, as your memory could serve, you had been taught,

you said, to consider the Constitution of Britain as the best possible, so united in church and state, as to form but one system, which must stand and fall together. Like man and wife, they co-existed in a moral unity. Hence whatever had a tendency to destroy that union, you were told to consider as hostile to the state. It threatened an adulterous invasion of the marriage contract. Sectaries then of every description you were to be jealous of and to hate; because as their belief was not that of your national church, and they often combated its doctrine and its discipline, it was clear they must be enemies to the Constitution. It mattered not that they professed to admire the beauty of the political fabric, and had perhaps been instrumental in its final construction: the ecclesiastical establishment, you maintained, was *essential* to its being, and therefore the foe to one was not the friend to either.

Every coercive and restraining law, whereby Sectaries were debarred from holding places of emolument and offices of trust,

trust, you approved; they were the barriers which your ancestors had raised, and to remove them would be to bring danger into the vitals of the state. It signified not that the church had its own laws, whereby its exclusive rights were secured, and the hireling was not permitted to enter the sacred pale: it moreover imported that the civil magistrate watched the common interest, lest a growing influence might imperceptibly undermine its outworks, and shake the holy hierarchy. The *Test Act* you therefore viewed as a most salutary statute, to vote the repeal of which no argument should impel you. You would persecute no man for his religious opinions; but the integrity of the national church must be upheld, you concluded, as dovetailed into the summers and essential stays of the state. — I asked you, if you laid any stress on the superiour truth and gospel-excellency of the tenets of your national religion? Your reply was; that that consideration weighed not on your mind; that you supposed your religion to be the best, though you had never examined the grounds of its doctrines; but that it

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was the religion of the state, and must *therefore* be maintained. Would you maintain it, I urged, if you thought it to be erroneous? Your ancestors had chosen it, you persisted, as best adapted to coalesce with the civil form of government, and you looked no farther. As a divine I smiled at your casuistry, and, for the moment, there the subject rested. Tell me, said I, what you think of the *Papists*?

The word *Papist*, you politely observed, though adopted in our statutes, you were not, you thought, as a gentleman, at liberty to use, because it was considered as insulting by the society, to which it had been applied. To my question, however, you would candidly reply, that, on that subject, your mind had received the deepest tincture. “ But
 “ spare me, Sir, you said, the unpleasant
 “ task of detailing to *you* the opinions I entertain. You well know what tenets, in
 “ politics and religion, we Protestants
 “ generally ascribe to you. What others
 “ think, that, I own, I do. Mingled as
 “ you now are in the common mass of
 “ citizens,

“ citizens, the free intercourse has rubbed
 “ away many prominent singularities, and
 “ you seem to think and act as other En-
 “ glishmen. The original character of your
 “ church is not for that altered, and if you
 “ be true to her, you cannot be friends to
 “ Britain. But I will say no more. Now I
 “ am ready to hear your apology. Remove
 “ my prejudices, if they be such: I am
 “ most willing to let them go; only to my
 “ leading principle I must ever remain
 “ firm, that no *Dissenters* from the national
 “ church, however innocent be their reli-
 “ gion, and loyal their politics, can, with
 “ safety to the constitution, be admitted to
 “ an unrestrained participation of all its
 “ privileges.”—I then, you will recollect,
 entered on the discussion, which forms a
 part of the ensuing Tract. This I have
 thrown into separate *Propositions*, that the
 series of argument might be more easily
 supported, while the subject seemed to di-
 vide itself, and to flow progressively.

And may I now indulge the pleasing
 hope, that the effect my conversation in
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part produced, has been completed by your own reflection? Prejudices once removed, how soon will the imposing Theory vanish, on which you had built so confidently. Surely, that government must be best constructed, and secured most stably, which extending, with an equal hand, its blessings to all, can command the equal love of all. With this maxim, where there are Dissenters, can the exclusive civil rights of a national church ally?

I am, &c.

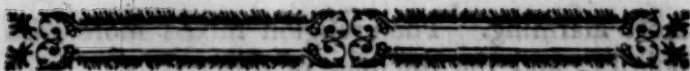
Oscott, near Birmingham,

April 6, 1789.

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T H E
RIGHTS of DISSENTERS, &c.

PROPOSITION I.

The Revolution, in 1688, a general benefit to all British subjects.

THE reader, at all acquainted with the history of his own country, must have discovered how unsettled was its government, in every period anterior to the *Revolution*, in the year sixteen hundred and eighty eight. But the evils of an unsettled government are too obvious to require illustration. There the monarch, actuated by the common passions of human nature, will aim at an arbitrary prerogative, and the people, feeling its pressure, will, at moments, resist. Resistance will generate commotions, and commotions will often terminate in all the horrors of civil strife. So it happened in many reigns of our kings.—After the *Reformation*, in the sixteenth century, particularly when the brilliant achievements of Elizabeth's reign had permitted the mind to return to cool reflection, the struggle became daily more serious, and to many

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more

more alarming. Then religion mixed more with politics ; and the disciples of John Calvin, bold, perseverant, and untractable, enemies to the parade of office, and the pageantry of the crown and mitre, pleaded that grace made all men free. Through the reigns of the two first Stuarts, we see the efforts of those sectaries ; and their descendants, no less than other Englishmen, now lament, that, on a certain memorable occasion, they could have been impelled to act the bloody scene they did. But as in nature there are violent convulsions, from which ultimately good arises ; so is it in society. The maxims of those men so soon carried to their acme, subsided into a comparative calm, and a happy influence sprang from them. Just notions of liberty and of the rights of all men, to the protection of equal laws, widely diffused a spirit, which could balance prerogative, and the too subservient condescension of the friends to unlimited monarchy.

At the *Restoration*, in sixteen hundred and sixty, another signal period, so infatuated was the nation, that nothing was done to ascertain the certain bounds of government. Fluctuating it remained ; only that the power of the crown was permitted to preponderate. For when it was restored to the head, which so long had pined without it, the prodigal hand of loyalty could not deck it in too gorgeous a manner. The cause of royalty triumphed, and the adverse party, reviled and persecuted, were now humbled
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in their turn, and made to feel the severity of coercive laws. But the leven, they had scattered, fermented, and its effects appeared in a thousand forms. To rouse the nation to a just sense of the real evils which threatened it, from a corrupt faction at home, and from the designs of an arbitrary monarch abroad, Louis the fourteenth of France, means were devised, at which morality and common honesty should have shuddered. But maxims by which the individuals of society are moved, make no impression on the aggregate, which party rage has once affected. They spoke of designs which they knew to be unreal, and of plots, which themselves had generated. An innocent party was thus made to suffer; but their ends were obtained, and the nation was alarmed. Thus in unceasing bickerings, and murmurs, and strife, and projects, passed the twenty four years of Charles.

James II. whom the popular party had nearly excluded from the throne, might have learned what their temper and power were. That the prerogative was still undefined he knew; and he also knew for what attempts his father had suffered, and what had recently disturbed his brother's reign. But experience is no lesson to certain minds, which bigotry has narrowed, and misconceptions of duty have pre-occupied. Instead therefore of temporising, which policy directed, and of aiming to allay the animosity of party, he resolved to meet it, and not to soothe
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prejudices,

prejudices, but to irritate them. He relied on a supposed loyalty to his person, which he had not measured, and on the airy rights of a prerogative, the stays of which had long since been undermined. The fabric stood, indeed; but wise men saw that the first commotion must crumble it into dust. The predilection of a thoughtless party, which had guarded Charles's throne, attached not to his successor, or it had weakened as such affections do. The maxims of the contrary party gained strength in proportion. It was evident that the cause of the people must soon preponderate.

But James seemed resolved to precipitate his own ruin: he would not wait for the progressive measures which a disaffected opposition might have moved against him; he would at once rouse the whole spirit of the nation, and exhaust the tamest patience. The history of his short reign forms one unbroken tissue of arbitrary and illegal acts. Yet James had many virtues: we must look therefore for the springs of his administration in a temper unaccountably perverted, and in the advice of the weakest counsellors. When he *suspended* statutes, and *dispensed* with laws, his intentions were to relieve a suffering society, and the power he assumed had, in many instances, been exercised by all his predecessors on the throne. The times, he should have known, were altered. What was once intrusted to the sovereign, or sometimes, perhaps,
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only connived at, because no jealousy was entertained of its abuse, could no longer be permitted, when other notions prevailed, and the people had learned to think, that the laws which secured their persons, their property, and their religion, were the only certain barrier against the arbitrary encroachments of the prerogative. The attempts to raise a standing army, without the consent of parliament, to erect a court of inquisitorial commission, to violate the freedom of elections, to levy money for the use of the crown, and to impede the right of petitioning, were all acts of signal despotism. But it was his resolution to subvert the national religion, or rather to extend to others the blessings of an equal toleration, which created the great alarm, and threw him from his throne.

It is wonderful that religion, so little practised and so little felt, should still possess so fascinating a charm in the name, (for it is in the *word* only that the charm rests) that men, to vindicate its imaginary rights, can rush into violencies which religion itself condemns, and adopt measures hostile to its spirit. So true is it, that impulse only guides the multitude. I should have been better pleased that motives of a civil tendency, which were then abundant, had produced the great event which followed, rather than considerations, falsely called religious, which, at no times, should mix with the policy of states. At all events, a general interest was excited ;

parties coalesced ; whigs, and tories, mother church and sectaries, for the first time, shook hands ; and faction and animosity ceased, that an unhappy and misguided sovereign might be taught, too late for his own happiness, a most salutary and important lesson. The prince of Orange landed, and the scene soon closed.

Now ended the struggle between the crown and the people, between prerogative and privilege, which, through centuries, creating disorders, and sometimes the most furious convulsions, had disturbed the repose and safety of the nation, and had rendered the regal diadem itself, to some heads that wore it, rather a crown of thorns. The *Revolution*, in every view, was a signal blessing. A more uniform edifice of government was erected, in which such parts of the old establishment, as did not harmonise with the more recent plans of liberty, were corrected ; a new settlement was made of the constitution ; the rights of king and people were permanently fixed. But no reasoning can so clearly evince the necessity there was of the measure as its own existence. A thinking and a wise nation, attached to their hereditary rulers, and rather inimical to a foreign prince, see themselves compelled to break asunder every tie, that their government may receive a better form. The first magistrate then learned that he had no rights ; but that his prerogative, which was ample, coming from the hand of the people,

ple, it was to be exercised for their good. To the settlement of the crown was annexed a *declaration of rights*, that the people also might know what their privileges were, and that faction, unfounded claims, and wayward complaints might cease. It is *declared* that the suspension of laws, without the consent of parliament, is illegal; that levying money for the use of the crown, without the same consent, is illegal; that it is the right of the subjects to petition; that prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal; that the raising or keeping up, a standing army, without consent of parliament, is contrary to law; that the subjects may have arms for their own defence; that elections of members to serve in parliament shall be free; that debates and proceedings in parliament shall be free; that excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed; that cruel and unusual punishments shall not be inflicted; that jurors shall be duly impannelled and returned. These, and others which are mentioned, are declared to be the undoubted rights and privileges of the people; and they were settled by the most solemn sanction.

I had then reason to say that the *Revolution* in 1688 was a general benefit to all British subjects; and the improved state of things, from that period, has demonstrated the truth.—Men of the established church must own it; because they live in full possession of whatever blessings it could confer, the privileges of men, and the confirmed immu-
nities

nities of their religion.—Sectaries, that is, the Protestant Dissenters, must own it; because though deprived of certain rights, by laws made anterior to that event, they still enjoy the peculiar benefits of the Revolution; and by having been principally instrumental in effecting it, they proved themselves entitled to every other immunity which a policy, weakly jealous, has till now denied them.—Even Catholics, that proscribed society, must own it; because though laws of great severity have since that time been enacted against them, they have enjoyed an encreasing tranquillity, and they can indulge the pleasing prospect, that, when it shall seem expedient to redress their many grievances, all the rights of subjects are ready prepared for their acceptance. Neither are they so selfish as not to feel some content in viewing the happiness of their fellow-citizens. It is the state of a traveller, who, weary and pressed with a heavy burthen, having arrived to the summit of a mountain, looks eagerly to the rich vale below, which he hopes to reach, and where providence has fixed his future habitation. He has only the declivity, he trusts, to descend.

But it may be asked with much propriety:—did Catholics always think, and speak, thus of the *Revolution*?

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My answer shall be candid. They always did not. — Impressed with the idea of *hereditary right*, they conceived it to have been violated in the person of James II. and therefore they could not withdraw their attachment from his family. But *Jacobitism* was not peculiar to them, nor dictated consequently by any certain maxims of their religion. Besides, the blessings of the Revolution, so loudly echoed through the kingdom, were not enjoyed by them; new laws even by William were made against them: in nothing benefited, what could they admire? But when, from the extinction of inveterate factions, themselves began to feel repose, they also began to reason, and they saw that the very family of their predilection was that, which had permitted, at least, their greatest oppression. A retrospect to the events of their own nation likewise told them, that how violent and illegal soever the introduction of a family may have been, the wisest and best men submitted, when the lapse of some years had confirmed the establishment. Surely then, they said, the maxim must prevail here, where comparatively no violence was committed; where the king on the throne weakly deserted it; and where the majority of the nation conspired in the measure. They quitted *Jacobitism*, and I believe I may say, many of them embraced the principles of that party, which is thought to understand best the true spirit of the constitution. They became *whigs*.

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Another question may be asked :—As the attempt to restore the religion of Catholics was what principally brought ruin on king James; can they, consistently with their persuasions, condemn the measure, or consistently applaud the *Revolution*, which alone perhaps impeded its completion?

My answer shall again be explicit. — When the measures of James's administration most directly tended to the introduction of the religion of Catholics, I condemn them. It is by no means of human policy that I wish to see my religion established; because all such means I conceive to be deordinate, and most clearly contrary to the essential spirit of christianity, exemplified in its first establishment. But moreover, the measures of the king, as has been shewn, were violent, sometimes illegal, and always arbitrary. What man will say, however warmly he may think of the truth of his religion, that he could bear to see it thus introduced? The laws that had proscribed their religion were, indeed, sanguinary and unmerited; still they were laws, only annulable by the power which had made them, the concurrent voice of Parliament.

In a second point of view, those measures must be censured, because their *principle* teemed with every mischief to the citizen. Allowed, that by them he had given to the Catholics the freest practice of their religious tenets: could themselves then
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have deemed their own persons and property secure? The same power that, in one instance, might dispense with laws, or suspend their execution, could, surely, extend it, with an equal right, to every other case. The precedent tended to make him, or his successor, a despot, bound by no laws, the lord of property, and the tyrant of the people.—The measures then of James, I condemn, whatever was their motive; and I applaud the Revolution, even if it impeded the restoration of my religion, because it broke down a principle, under which neither that same religion, nor property, nor person could have enjoyed security.

PROPOSITION II.

The benefits of the Revolution should be communicated to all British subjects.

IF the legislators of any country, in the first formation of its government, as in the united states of America, or in any succeeding new settlement of it, as in England, at the Revolution; had not loaded a simple proposition with many extraneous considerations, the blessings of a distributive justice would have been more equally apportioned, than hitherto they have been. The simple proposition is this: *The end of government is to effect the greater happiness of society.* Its principle is coincident with that

that on which every community is established. Individual considerations are sacrificed to the good of the aggregate, and in return, the individuals claim protection and such other benefits, as are within the sphere of such communities to bestow. Government is a higher arrangement, the sphere of whose operation is wider, but whose constituent principle is the same, and whose duties are similar. What society of rational beings would voluntarily have subjected themselves to the tasks of subordination, the contributions of property, and the exhibition of such personal services, as are necessary for the support of governments, had they not calculated that it was their interest so to do? But if the end of government be the greater happiness of society; are not all the members of that society entitled to an equal claim? In the general proposition, most evidently they are; and this maxim it is, which may be supposed to have guided all legislators in the formation of such statutes or ordinances, as seemed best adapted to the mode of government, which the people had chosen. *Salus populi suprema lex.*

On the solemn occasion, admitting the maxim in its full extent, it would still be their duty, as it would obviously occur to wise men, to institute the following enquiry.—Legislating as we are, they would say, for the greater happiness of this wide community, let us consider whether there may not be

be individuals, or perhaps bodies of men, in it; to whom it may not be prudent to communicate all the rights and privileges, to which the nation, at large, is clearly entitled. As to individuals, no such scrutiny can be necessary, because it would be endless; and the coercion of law and the activity of the magistrate will, on that side, ever prove a sufficient barrier. Now for bodies or societies of men. If there be any, the *practical principles* of which, either from an habitual attachment to some other form of government, or from a mutinous opposition to legal controul, or from maxims subversive of order and moral fitness; must have a certain and permanent tendency to generate strife, and thus to obstruct the beneyolent stream which shall carry happiness to others, such a society shall be restrained from a participation of benefits, which they merit not, and which will only be made the engines of their malevolent designs.

A procedure, somewhat similar to this, we may suppose always to have been instituted, and to its expediency no one could object. To enquire further into the principles or maxims of societies, than under such general heads, as I mentioned, would be nugatory; because they seem to contain every source of civil depravity, which the legislator or politician can have any right to investigate. I also mentioned *practical principles*; because mere *theory*, if there be imaginations wild enough to indulge it in
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its most extravagant flights, is a phantom too unsubstantial for legislative discussion. What constitutes the obedient subject and the useful citizen, and what may obstruct or frustrate these beneficial effects, only comes within that sphere. To involve other matter is as absurd, as should an artisan become a candidate for the liberties of his trade, he were examined on his proficiency in the coran of Mahomet.

When then, at the Revolution, we find that all orders of Englishmen were not admitted to an equal share in its benefits, we are authorised to conclude, that, on the enquiry being made, which I have exhibited, some were discovered to be undeserving of them, from past conduct, or present principles. The laws tell us who they were : The *Protestant Dissenters*, and the *Roman Catholics*.—But were not these men, at the time, useful citizens and obedient subjects ; or were they attached to some other form of government, or rejected legal controul, or held maxims of a pernicious tendency ? The subject merits some revision.

The *Protestant Dissenters* were the people, I have said, whose favourite maxims, gradually modifying the political sentiments of the nation, not only prepared them for the Revolution, but ultimately operated its completion. The *national church*, adhering to the principles of their ancestors, (which were those of passive obedience and non-resistance) could never
even

even have imagined a measure, subversive, at the first view, of the arrangements they admired, and of the duties they held sacred. — No invidious thoughts can be imputed to me, when I allude to facts, resting on the most unequivocal documents of history. — The *Secularies* then having been the primary movers of the great event ; in what could they have been unworthy of enjoying its most signal effects ? It was rather natural that, in reward and approbation of their services, they should have been marked by distinction, and honour, and every flattering testimony. To suppose the principles which produced the effect, not deserving of its compensation, is an insult to common understandings : and not only not to reward those principles, but to punish them by coercions, and to restrain, as far as might be, their further operation, was, it must be owned, an extraordinary process. It could not be suspected, that the hands which had been principally instrumental in raising the beautiful fabric, would be inclined, in wayward spitefulness, to break asunder all its ties, and again return to the former state of faction and of arbitrary sway. These suggestions are all idle ; wherefore there could be no *political* motives, at the Revolution, for continuing those restraints on the Protestant Dissenters, which had been laid on them, for reasons most obvious, during the preceding reigns, and particularly in that of Charles II. But I have purposely introduced the words, *National church* and *Secularies*,
and

and they at once expound the whole problem. I shall hereafter consider how far the single circumstance of *dissenting*, in points of *speculative* belief, from the national religion of a country be, to a private understanding, sufficient grounds for the enactment of *political* restraints.

The *Catholics* were the other body of men, to whom the blessings of the Revolution were not permitted to extend. Were they deserving of the exclusion?—I think they were. They remained attached to another form of government, that is, they were *Jacobites*; and as they condemned the *Revolution* in its principle, which they would have been happy to have impeded, and which they repined to see achieved, what claim had they to indulgence, or to partake of benefits, the source of which they execrated? Not only, therefore, was an exclusion from these benefits strictly equitable; but as far as their disaffection to government could have a probable tendency to disturb it, so far also it was expedient to check it by adequate laws. But, in the eye of impartial justice, the *Catholics* now stood on the same ground as other *Jacobites*, in nothing differing from them; because, evidently, it was no peculiar tenet of their religion, which prompted them to embrace a political sentiment, in which they had so many associates of the Protestant persuasion. With these they were to suffer, in the same degree, and in the same duration; and if the *Protestant Jacobite*, quitting

ting his prejudices, and swearing allegiance, would be released from restraints, which common equity admitted, the *Catholic* of the same description might plead, it seems, an equal claim to mercy. But it so happened, that, the statutes enacted against the latter, even after the Revolution, did not describe them as *Jacobites*, in which capacity only they were deserving of coercion, but as *Papists*, that is, as men punishable for *peculiar religious tenets*. Wherefore, though their *Jacobitism* were away, and they solemnly swore *allegiance* to the house of *Brunswick*, the operation of the statutes ceased not, as they still continued to be that description of subjects, which the law pointed out by the name of *Papist*.

Catholics then, it must appear, in the contemplation of the law, were liable to penalties and disabilities, not as *Jacobites* only, for an oath of allegiance removed that odium; nor as merely *dissenting* from the national church, or they would have experienced the indulgence granted, at different times, to *Protestant Sectaries*. In the books of statutes they are marked as a people meriting the severest penalties; at the Revolution the same prepossession remained against them; nor has it yet ceased. By the name *Papist* was suggested an idea, to which belonged principles, and tenets, and a line of conduct, that should exclude them not from the benefits of the *Revolution* only; but even from the ordinary privileges, to which, before that

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period,

period, *British Subjects* were entitled. If there be truth in this representation of the law, then was my second proposition *false*, that *the benefits of the Revolution should be communicated to all British subjects*. The question demands some investigation.

PROPOSITION III.

The English Catholics hold no principles or opinions which should exclude them from the benefits of the Revolution.

AN author of great merit has asserted, (*Moral and Political Philosophy*) that "it is not to Popery, that the laws object, but to Popery, as the mark of Jacobitism." And "Jacobitism," he adds, is the *sole* cause of suspicion, and the *sole* cause of those severe and jealous laws, which have been enacted against the professors of that religion."—This is by no means true. Those severe and jealous laws were principally made before the existence of *Jacobitism*; and after the Revolution, when the attachment to the exiled house of Stuart acquired that name, the statutes then enacted against Catholics still described them, as I observed, by the accepted appellation of *Papist*. By the *oath of allegiance* they took to his present majesty, their *Jacobitism* was legally cancelled, but the severe and jealous laws remained. It is then to *popery*, as such, that the laws object. And with
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no common device was that word first assumed into the statutes. It had been given to the professors of the old religion, when the *Reformation* began, as a mark of reproach, importing an undue attachment to the *bishop of Rome*, and signifying an adhesion to every abuse or extravagance, which, with truth or falshood, was then imputed to them. The word came loaded to the ear with a vast weight of obloquy. Indeed, had Catholics, in the first acceptation of the term *Papist*, really ascribed that unbounded power to the pope, with which their adversaries charged them, I know of no word that could have described them so properly; since, in that case, they would have maintained a doctrine subversive not of liberty only and the common rights of citizens, but of all the independence and sovereignty of crowned heads. In no period of the English history, even in the darkest ages, did we hold such monstrous doctrine; and when it was imputed to us, we repelled the imputation. But as the sinister views of party could be answered by fastening the opprobrious charge; the word that conveyed it was pertinaciously adhered to. Still English Catholics are not *Papists*, nor ever were. It is a palpable misnomer.

Jacobitism then being cancelled, is there any other political tenet which can militate against the loyalty of Catholics, or render their patriotism suspicious? Absolutely none. Their civil creed is as orthodox,

as that of the most strenuous Englishman, and they admire the constitution, in all its parts, *as established at the Revolution*. To the support of government they contribute more than their fellow-citizens, though their means of doing it are less; and if their personal services aid not the state, the blame, if any there be, must lie with the laws, which refuse to admit them, only on terms at which their consciences revolt.—This being so, let us look to their *religious tenets*; for it cannot be that a wise, a just, and a humane, government would permit legal penalties and restrictions to remain, were there no jealousy or specious motive, at least, to sanction the measure.

— But in examining what are called the *religious tenets* of a society, it cannot be necessary to pass those in review, which are purely of a *spiritual* or *speculative* nature. These have no connection, most distantly, with the civil conduct of the subject, and may therefore be presumed wholly to belong to another order of things. For example, my belief in the *Trinity* of persons, or in the *Septenary* number of the Sacraments. Were the magistrate to take cognizance of such tenets, surely, he would pass the limits of his jurisdiction; and were he to restrict or punish the belief, he would persecute for conscience sake. This will not be denied. But if there be *religious tenets*, which can influence, even *remotely*, the public conduct of the citizen, or which can lead
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to the admission of opinions, by which the peace and well-being of society may be affected, such tenets may become the matter of legal discussion, and be proscribed.

Were there that candour in the minds of men, which the benevolence of human nature is thought to suggest, and which education should foster, and religion animate, never would it be necessary to agitate such questions as these. Then it would, on all hands, be allowed, that every man's religion taught him to be virtuous, and that the excesses of individuals, either in-conduct or opinion, were not imputable to the society they were of. But when the purposes of party must be promoted, in religion as in politics, the ordinary maxims of truth are not heeded, and an equitable judge is a phenomenon.

In the creed of Catholics exist no such tenets as I have alluded to ; but such have been imputed to them : That they hold, *no faith is to be kept with heretics* ; that they admit a power, which can *dispense with the most solemn engagements*, and which can *depose princes from their thrones*.—It is not, I hope, expected, that I should enter on a formal refutation of these charges. So often has it been done, that to repeat it must be nugatory ; and they who are not already convinced, are out of the reach of conviction. The subject, I own, raises in me a disgust, which is more than mental. Yet such men, as the

R. R. Richard Lord Bishop of Cloyne, in a popular pamphlet, (*The present state of the church of Ireland*) has again produced them; and the *Protestant Dissenters*, on a recent occasion, could present them to the members of the house of Commons of England!! His *Lordship* vainly trembled for the *tithes* and *immunities* of his national church, and therefore the use of the most cowardly arms, in its defence, he deemed advantageous, and, perhaps, honourable. The Protestant Dissenters, in applying for a redress of grievances, were actuated by motives somewhat similar. They knew how the prejudices of many stood against them, and fancied their own tawny complexion might seem blanched, in proportion to the additional smut they could lay on ours.

Could I be persuaded to think that either his Lordship or they believed the charges to be true, it would be culpable in me to ascribe such motives to them: But then, I must insult their understandings and their hearts. Ever we have solemnly denied those charges, and we have refuted them by arguments drawn from authority, and from our own conduct, the most unanswerable of all proofs. When this has been done, and often done, to repeat the same calumny argues what is most base in the human mind. But, as I have observed, it is a branch of the general system assumed at the *Reformation*, when it was judged expedient to justify the separation,

tion, by heaping a mountain of obloquy on the old church. The reflection touches not the characters of many individuals, learned, religious, benevolent, and sincere; it only goes to stigmatise the blind zeal of party, the casuistry of which I have described, generated in passion, and nurtured by interest, or ambition, or enthusiasm. The canons of the same casuistry we also have followed, when it was our interest to use them; for it is not my intention to insinuate that all societies of men, in similar circumstances, are not actuated alike.—We admit then no such tenets as those now mentioned; believing that faith is to be kept with all men; that there exists not a power which can dispense from oaths, or any such engagements; and that the reins of government, entrusted to one man, by the voice of the English people, are controulable only by them.

We are said to be *Idolaters*. The established church, and many of the *Sectaries*, against whom, for their *adoration* of a *Trinity* of persons, a similar charge is now brought, can feel, on their own experience, what weight it has.—But were I an idolater in the old import of the word, and adored my wooden God, by the way side, or in my closet, it would, I think, be no concern of the civil magistrate, provided I obeyed his laws, and had neither stolen the stump that formed him, nor defrauded the workman of his hire who had hewn him into shape. The
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history of christian persecution began, when, by authority, they overturned these images, and destroyed their temples. But we Catholics are no idolaters, and I trust my assertion will be admitted as a proof.

Reviewing the other articles of my belief, I find them to be of the most inoffensive character, such as the jealous statesman must contemplate with indifference. The divine may form his own judgment, and he is free to do it. The ground of controversy is open to him; on which we have often met and combated.—One article there is, which, though often discussed, and explained in a manner competent, it seems, to satisfy the most suspicious understanding, I am not willing to pass by. *That*, I have reason to think, is the only remaining source of real alarm, and could this once be laid, we might hope to experience a speedy redress of grievances. I speak of the *supremacy of the Roman bishop*.

The more I have considered this threadworn question, the more has every review convinced me, that its object never should have excited the fears of a discriminating and impartial public. But such a public, alas! had no existence; and here we have another of those points, on which party has fastened with an inveterate pertinacity. The language of the first Reformers, and the copied representations of their descendents, shew, that they viewed it as
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their sheet anchor, by which the vessel they had launched was to hold, in the highest storms of controversy. Yet they had read history, and well knew that the alarms they strove to raise were ideal ; that their basis was a fiction. I have my serious doubts, whether the Reformation could ever have made its way in the Christian churches of Europe, without the portentous machinery, to which I allude. The prejudices of ages, for I will now call them so, were to be surmounted, and this no ordinary means could effect. The person, therefore, and power of the pope, were brought before the people, and that no circumstance, which can affect the mind, might be wanting, recourse was had to the *book of Revelations*. Thence they draw a horrible imagery, and fitted it, in all the disproportions of a monster, to the figure they would present. Yet what, at that time, was the pope, or rather what had he been, when his power was greatest ?

However much I may be attached to my religion, I never felt the least disposition to defend it by address, or any disguise of its most suspicious tenets. Why should I attempt it now ? And the sources of information which lie open to me, are open to the world.—When the power of the Pope was greatest, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, history says, he was useful to Christendom as he was powerful, and powerful as he was religious. A profligate pope could be turbulent, but his influence decreased

creased as he receded from that line of virtue, which the most ignorant men were aware should ever be pursued by the first pastor of the church. With this notion, let me ask, whether more good than evil would not be effected by an administration so constituted, the principle of whose increasing influence was virtue, or at least, the shew of it, which in its effects would be the same? Europe was now divided into governments, unorganized and fluctuating, torn by internal strife, and open to perpetual invasion. To allay these feuds, to conciliate animosities, to generate harmony, was the real interest of the pontiff; because as his sway rested on opinion, this was best maintained in that temper of mind which leads to submission. The kings had recourse to him for the termination of differences and quarrels, with their subjects, and with one another; because as no settled laws or customs had ascertained the extent of rights, or privileges, or even of territory, only the power, deemed paramount to every other, could award a definitive judgment. But such applications, whenever they were made, served to sanction the jurisdiction of the court which received them. It is notorious, that the whole prerogative was adjudged to it by these proceedings, and, on other occasions, by the concessions of princes, who found their advantage in it.

Rome, thus the centre of communication, kept up an intercourse with the remotest provinces; and possessing

possessing the sciences, and the arts, and the best knowledge of the times, they were diffused from their source, and carried improvement with them.

— All power that man administers is subject to abuse, and such was the power of Rome. It was abused; but its salutary effects far preponderated; and I can pronounce with confidence, that, whatever men may think, who only view one side of the object, christendom owed much of the civilization, and science, and virtue, and religion which it then possessed, to the prevailing influence of the Roman pontiff. Providence commits not the world to the caprice of human passions; but to every period has wisely pre-ordained the fittest means for the maintenance of truth and virtue.

The influence of Rome in this country was not permanently great. When the urgency of their affairs seemed to want it, the princes implored its interference; so did the prelates and nobility in their appeals and remonstrances. But when they had sources of defence, of accusation, or of annoyance, at home, adequate to their wishes, they thought not of the Roman see, and stood on their own strength. Its legates, on these occasions, were treated with a marked indifference; nor, at any time, could they enter the kingdom without the consent of the monarch. The transactions of every reign clearly announced, that whatever power was exercised.

exercised by the pope, as manager or mediator in the concerns of state, it was not considered as irrevocably annexed to his office. What might be his own persuasions, mattered little.

The influence, I speak of, every where decreased, as the opinion of its utility ceased to prevail. Governments acquired a more stable form, their constitutions were better defined, and thus the rights of all orders being more legally ascertained, they looked not to a foreign jurisdiction for decision or support. But then it was not so easy to break at once from a chain of dependence which themselves had forged. The popes, born of the race of man, finding themselves in possession of a power, which gradually rose to a vast magnitude, had endeavoured to strengthen and secure it by every possible expedient. Recourse was had to precedents, drawn from the highest antiquity, which courtly and misjudging canonists laboured to establish, and to the authority of the scriptures, arbitrarily and loosely interpreted. What was *human*, soon became a *divine* right; for only that could be *divine*, which the purest antiquity had immediately derived from the source of the christian establishment. And the rise, the progress, the exercise of that prerogative, which I speak of, might be traced through all its stages. The steps of its decline and fall are equally visible.

Such

Such was the power of Rome, viewed on the page of history, formed by the concurrence of many circumstances, and dissolved to its present state, by as obvious an arrangement of human events. No jurisdiction, I will venture to assert, was ever less usurped, because it was freely delegated; and none was ever less abused, because it was generally exercised for the purposes for which it was bestowed. That it never should have been bestowed, could the state of things have borne its absence, I am most willing to allow; but the friends to *national churches*, and their temporal power, should view, I think, with pleasure the exaltation of a jurisdiction, whence their own scheme can draw authority and support.

Ascribing, as I do, every thing that is *temporal*, every thing that can raise the most distant fears, in the papal prerogative, to *human establishment*, I may very properly be asked, what it is I conceive to be the essential and *divine* right of the Roman bishop? — That only which he had *from the beginning*: That which Peter exercised, and his immediate successors. A *supremacy*, or pre-eminence of jurisdiction, which constituted him and them, the first pastors or *primates* of the christian church. *Quod semper, quod ab omnibus, quod ubique*, is the certain and golden canon, by which all doctrines must be tried. If they derive from the apostolic ages; were then admitted as divine truths, wherever christianity was established;

ed; the sacredness of their origin may be pronounced, and never otherwise. Every posterior source is human. By this process, it will be found, that the *bishop* of the Roman see was received as the *primate* of the church, then forming; not indeed so visibly, till after the deaths of the apostles, because as their mission was extraordinary, we are not to look for a regular establishment, till that expired.—The pope of Rome then is the *head* of the Catholic church, and on that *single article* rests our belief.

What then is his jurisdiction, and its extent; for in the idea of *primacy* is essentially included that of jurisdiction?—I allow it. But as so little power was exercised at first, and when the church had adopted a more regular form of government, planned by its own members, (and it was not said what acts of the primate emanated from his essential power, and what from its extension; as superadded by ecclesiastical appointment) it soon became impossible clearly to define the acts of jurisdiction, and to say, *this* is from his primacy as established by Christ, *that* from the new powers erected by the ministry. Nor was it necessary, while the whole jurisdiction or prerogative was administered with so great caution and parsimony, as it long was, to make a distinction, or to institute an enquiry. In process of time, as the complication increased, the difficulty increased with it, and the point was never ascertained. Rather,

ther, the popes themselves, in the times I above spoke of, when their jurisdiction was greatest, and most widely removed from the simplicity of its source, were much inclined to represent the whole fabric as of divine origin. The church itself never adopted the wild pretension; they clearly saw how unfounded it was; and though they might respect many branches of the papal power, as established for wise purposes, and strengthened by the use of ages, they uniformly and steadily only adhered to the single truth, *that the bishop of Rome was their primate.*

In different countries the exercise of the papal jurisdiction has, at all times, been different, in some more, in others, less limited, and that, agreeably to their civil laws, and the discipline of their respective churches. And in the plenitude of his power, the pontiff was not permitted to invade these rights. The Gallican is not the only church that has repelled all infraction of its privileges. Still the idea of primacy is compatible with all, and is admitted by all.

For a moment, let me suppose the Catholic religion were re-established in these countries:—Gentle reader, be not alarmed—what jurisdiction would the see of Rome hold in it?—To my own question I cannot reply with precision; because I cannot pretend to say, what might, on the occasion, be the decision of the legislature. But as no power
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would be admitted, which could, most distantly, affect the civil government of the realm, or the liberty of the subject (to which power, indeed, Rome no longer pretends); none that could alter or abridge the discipline and independence of a national church; and none that could take from the sovereignty of the crown, whereby the king can rule over all manner of persons, is the political head of the church, and the lord of all his people; as this would be the case, in what would king or people be affected? Is his majesty's controul less in Canada, at this moment, than it is in Nova Scotia?

Nothing, perhaps, better defines an object, than the enunciation of what it is not. The pope of Rome, unless as a prince in his own territories, possesses no temporal power, consequently he can exercise none: he has no concern with kings or their governments, with the peoples rights, property, or privileges: he can dispense with no engagements, whereby man is bound to man, dissolve no allegiance, suspend no compacts, stipulations, or treaties: Nor is his ecclesiastical power, which alone agrees to his character, above the canons and discipline of the universal church. As primate he cannot annul them; he cannot violate the particular constitutions of national churches; he cannot controul their ministers in the canonical exercise of their respective offices; he cannot make new ordinances which they are not free to reject; he cannot issue bulls, or briefs, or rescripts,

rescripts, which the civil magistrate, in every country, has not power to inspect; in a word, he can do nothing, in his capacity of primate, but what is for the utility of the church, and that dependently of established order, the fundamental maxims of antiquity, and the respect due to crowned heads, and the just rights of their subjects.

Now, surely, I may conclude with the *Proposition* I assumed, that the *English Catholics hold no principles or opinions, which should exclude them from the benefits of the Revolution.* But though I had proved this to the conviction of every fair-judging man, and had also shewn the truth of my second proposition, that the *benefits of the Revolution should be communicated to all British subjects*, still would much be withheld from them as long as they *dissented*, in religious belief, from the national establishment. This draws me to a further discussion of no small import.

PROPOSITION IV.

The establishment of National churches seems unauthorised by the spirit of Christianity; does not promote the real cause of religion; is hurtful to the general interest of the state.

AS the question before me has no greater reference to the establishment of England, than it has to those of other countries, where the catholic religion prevails, I can treat it with freedom, and not be suspected of partial views.

1.—To judge properly of the spirit of any institution, we should not go far for documents. The sentiments, the conduct, the instructions of those, who most immediately framed its laws, will give us all we can desire. What may afterwards have been superadded, from other motives, and in other circumstances, can weigh little, or rather nothing, to invalidate the leading principles of the first institution. So we judge of the civil establishments of Lycurgus, or of Solon, or of the mixed polity of the jewish legislator.—It is not more evident that the founder of the christian system despised worldly honour, and wealth, and pleasure, to teach us that virtue only merited esteem, than that he rejected all

all means of human power, whereby the truths he came to deliver, might have been propagated or maintained. It was on the persuasive operation of a disinterested and benevolent life, that he relied for success, and on the display of miracles which then were necessary. Had other means, in the order of unerring wisdom, been more expedient, can we think, they would have been neglected? But he who, in his private life, and as a member of society, practised the virtues, which alone can give worth to both; so also, in his public capacity, as the great minister of religion, did he pursue the means best adapted to the end. Will this be disputed? I quote not particular texts or passages of those writings, which are believed to contain the certain proofs of his divine mission, and the most beautiful maxims of truth, because they, as usual, might be controverted. The character of the whole cannot, and is irresistible.—In directing his followers how they should act, after he had left them, he prescribes no other rule. He tells them not when kings, and potentates, and states shall be converted, to avail themselves of the circumstance, and thereby to shield their faith. Never does he point to human means; because, though all power in heaven and on earth had been given to him, his kingdom was not of this world.

True to the lessons, they had heard, the disciples copied the fair original. Had they adopted

other conduct, little would they have merited the confidence reposed on their honest integrity. Their writings breathe the same spirit; submission to the rulers of kingdoms; but no communication with their laws, "that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." —Nor for some ages afterwards was it thought that Religion stood in need of any aid, but what its own efficacy and precepts, and the conduct of its immediate ministers could supply. Yet it should seem that, when the obstacles to its progress were greatest, men of wisdom would not have omitted any means which could have a tendency to remove them. The annals of the church, in its awful opening, are a beautiful illustration of the maxims, which its founder had established; and shall it be, when religion had taken deep root, when its branches widely extended, and could defy the storm, that then, and not before, the aid of states should be called in to trench round it, and to erect their gaudy battlements? The grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, had grown and flourished in the open field. The order, surely, is preposterous. But we know when the human scheme began, and why, and how it began; and that it prevailed as men seemed most to depart from the simplicity of the first institution.

I shall be told that my reasoning is vain; because when christianity first began, and was first propagated,

propagated, so lowly was its state, that it could look to no protection from the powers of the world.—Why then was its state lowly? Why was its divine legislator not born rather in the palace of Herod, from whose ministers he might have drawn his disciples, and with them have *established* the first essay of state christianity? But he took them from their nets by the sea of Galilee; and the wise men, said to have been kings, who came from the east to worship him, he had not retained in his service. Was *he* ignorant, shall it be suggested, of the best means for founding his new kingdom?—Thus were his disciples, and we, made to understand, that as the objects of the two departments, religion and polity, were different, so should be their means of establishment and support. The object of one is temporal happiness; of the other that which is eternal. To attempt the former by means spiritual, would be absurd. And it shall be thought the acme of wisdom; to promote the latter by human policy or the patronage of states? For wherever I see religion, I cannot divest myself of the idea annexed to its character, that its object is ever the same as it primarily was. Why then invent means for its support? or was it found that the first were inadequate? or that the truths of religion, when widely diffeminated, could no longer stand on their own basis?

The history of *church establishments*, I could trace with pleasure, would my bounds allow it. It has been done by many, and it has been found to be the history of the *decline of Christianity*. As the simplicity of first principles was overshadowed by human inventions, and as the humility, the disinterestedness, the laborious exertions of the ministers of religion, gave place to ostentatious parade, the pride of wealth, and the solicitude attendant on power and the possession of domain, began the motly form of national churches. Their foundation then was human passion; for till this acquired a sway, they did not exist. The process was very gradual. The church possessed riches, long before it was possessed by them; and the use made of them was the best possible. But when the inundation of barbarous nations, overpowering in their progress the remains of Roman virtue, introduced new maxims; with them sprang up a new order of things, and the rules of feudal establishments prevailed. Churchmen now were lords of landed property, acquired by the favour of their chieftains, or by other obvious means; they were interested in the welfare of the state; and they looked for protection. Nor was it till this period, that we see exactly traced those lines of polity, which, with some variation, have since universally prevailed. The representatives or ministers of the church, whether prelates, or abbots, or inferior dignitaries, became

became a part of the common mass of nobles, bound by their tenures to the same military service, attending, at his call, on the prince's court, and exercising, over their vassals, the power of feudal jurisdiction. In nothing, but their dress, were they distinguished from the laity; and their possessions, and the mortmain possessions of churches and convents, were more than an adequate portion of the landed property of the realm. A body of men so powerful became, at once, a great national object. Their allegiance or their defection could support or shake the thrones of princes. Their good-will was therefore courted, and, in return, they required not the ordinary protection of vassals only, but privileges to their order, and immunities from secular laws. The spirit of their institution was lost, but themselves had not forgotten that they possessed, in the right of former functions, a claim to exemptions from the burthens of civil life.

Out of these grants, and prior concessions, and practices, and customs, arose a tremendous code, to which the name of *laws* was given, sanctioned, it was pretended, by precedent, and the awful stamp of antiquity. But they also pronounced them to be *sacred*, and that fiat was to involve kingdoms in strife and bloodshed. On the accession of a new prince, whether from inheritance or usurpation, or when general grants or charters of liberty were procured by the people, the body of the clergy could

could not be forgotten. They ever came foremost, and the weight they bore in the scale, gave them the pretension. To protect their liberties was the first clause of the oath enacted from the prince. He complied with it, and, from the moment, the holy *establishment* was formed. It was even pretended to be congenial with the civil constitution; for this plausible reason, that the same oath gave existence to, or confirmed both. It was the *alliance* between church and state.

Thus were national churches constructed, and they have been perpetuated. I said, *they seemed unauthorised by the spirit of christianity*. The mind of the reader will easily recapitulate the short view I have exhibited, which is not overcharged or fancied, and then judge.

2.—*They do not promote the real cause of religion.*—The *cause* of religion is promoted by the prevalence of those doctrines, which, rendering man more perfect, in his moral capacity, fit him for happiness in a future state of existence. Is it by *establishments* this great point is best effected, or by the simple modes of edification primarily inculcated? The reply can cause no hesitation. In the first ages, said a writer of some note, the church was more holy, but now it is happier. A false and arrogant assertion.—To view the world, as it is now constituted, either national churches exist, where there is
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unity of belief, or where there is *diversity*. In neither case, is religion benefited. In the first, if the doctrines of the establishment be *erroneous*, the progress of truth will be impeded: For one of the designs of establishments is, by exclusive privileges and legal barriers, to secure the supposed integrity of its faith, and to repel innovation. If its doctrines be *true*; they want no human stays, which always raise a suspicion, that the fabric stands on sand. Never was the spread of truth so rapid, as when its own energy was the only spring. — If there be *diversity* of belief, it matters not by what means introduced, I see a cloud of evils rising from establishments. A ground for persecution will be laid; affections, narrow and malevolent, will be generated, a source of strife and bickerings; party-names will be given; opinions, designs, purposes will be imputed. Is the cause of religion thus promoted?

In the establishment itself, I can discover no plan for the extension of virtue; much for the growth of the selfish and worldly passions. Secure in the possession of wealth and preferment, or looking eagerly towards both, the ministers of religion will relax in soft indulgence, or they will be filled with cares, which are not those of a man abstracted from the world, and devoted to his neighbours service. Ambition, vanity, profusion, will find their way to the soft couch of preferment, while the more indigent

gent and patronless will pine in the humble walk, at the sight of ease and honours, to which they may not reach.—But my argument, it will be said, goes to the exclusion of all dignity and wealth from churchmen.—And suppose it should? But my intention is only to censure settled plans of aggrandisement and immunities, whereby the spirit of christian moderation being once broken, no hopes can ever be formed that its vigour may be recovered.—And in what are the people benefited? Not in religious instruction, which is what I now consider; and, in all countries, I refer to the state of the dissenters from the establishment, whether, as their ministers are more dependent and more active, their flocks also are not better attended, and consequently more regular and more religious. — The dignity of establishments must be supported by tithes, a compulsory and unfair contribution, and another source of disagreement and jealousy. There was once a celebrated division of church property into four parts; for the reparation of places of worship, for the poor, for the clergy, and for the bishop. It was a wise arrangement, and contributions were freely made. The workman, I know, deserves his wages. But then he must work, and he must work for me, and I am free to hire him; or he takes from me what he has not earned. Of all the grievances of establishments this comes nearest to a man's feelings. And is the cause of religion here promoted?

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A man, who well understood the import of religion, taking his final leave of a people for whom he had laboured much, shewed them his hands, saying: "Yourselfes know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." — But the dignity of religion must be maintained by external splendour. Vain and idle subterfuge. "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts." — I have not half enumerated the evils of establishments, and searching anxiously for some good effects, I cannot find a single one to cast into the opposite scale. I will thank the more penetrating eye which shall shew me where it lies, and I will produce it to inspection. The state, perhaps, may be benefited by them.

3. — *They are hurtful to the general interest of the state.* — In kingdoms, where unity of belief prevails, some advantage, I allow, may be derived to the state from establishments. The dignities and emoluments it can confer will bind the interested and ambitious more warmly to its service. That will be the advantage. But in other kingdoms, the contrary effect will preponderate, in a greater proportion. It is the obvious interest of states to possess the attachment, and to be able to command the services of all their members. But should there
be

be laws, as generally there are, made to exclude those from offices of trust or profit, whose consciences cannot comply with certain prescribed formalities, then must the services of these men be lost, and at the same time, must be weakened their attachment to the state, which requires to be nourished and rewarded. The natural affections of the mind look only to present good or evil.

So obvious is this part of my proposition, that I can have no hesitation in saying, that, national churches would never have existed, had a great variation in belief, at all times, divided the subjects of kingdoms. But when they were formed, there were no such differences; all thought alike, and therefore it appeared, that all were benefited by the arrangement. The present conduct of the American states proves the truth of my assertion. The face of christendom is much altered; but establishments remain as they were; that is, their spirit remains, to the manifest detriment of nations. Politicians, therefore, are compelled to say, that Sectaries, in general, hold principles inimical to the state. On no other supposition can they pretend to justify the continuance of a system, begun in the evident breach of the best discipline of christianity, and perpetuated by narrow and interested views. It may be said to be arrogant, thus peremptorily to arraign what nations and their wisest heads have planned and supported. I know the stress of the reflection,

reflection, because that was the plea which so long maintained the most monstrous schemes in religion, morality, and politics, which the wildest inventions of man had produced. It supported *Polytheism*, itself a *religious establishment*.

The *alliance between church and state* are imposing words, and it is really strange there should not be some substance in them. But the connection, I think, I have proved to be unnatural; then why look for the pleasing evidence of truth or propriety, which just schemes can exhibit? Religion, viewed in itself, is a noble and captivating object; some political plans of government have great proportion and harmony of parts: but they recede from mutual contact, and are only made to approach by a violation of order, by an extinction of character on one side, and by an undue interference on the other. Where the church, indeed, possesses great temporal power, the offices to which this is annexed should not be bestowed, without the knowledge and co-operation of the state. But because the state, on these occasions, consistently with the sovereignty it holds over all its subjects, should interfere, can there be a stronger argument urged for the inexpediency of the possession?

Had states agreed to the enactment of laws, or subscriptions, or formularies, whereby the door to church preferment might be kept shut against all,
who

who did not profess the doctrines of the establishment, though the regulation would make many hypocrites, it would have been relieved from many objections. Every society is mistress of its own internal economy. But when *religious tests* are established, which shall determine the subject's *civil capacity* to hold offices or to serve the state, it is then that the understanding of a common man revolts, and he views the whole scheme as the offspring of a mistaken policy. To veil it with a gloss of some imposition, it has been the endeavour of all establishments to persuade the state, that their peculiar privileges, and the nature or character of their doctrines were so essentially connected with its political constitution, that this would suffer, were the smallest encroachment made on the former; even if men were permitted to serve in its fleets or armies, or to plead at its bar, whose faith was not the faith of the national church. That churches should have attempted this, I am not surprised: my surprise is that it should have succeeded, and that the flimsy veil has not long ago been drawn aside. In many countries it is doing; why should it not be done in this? I am thus led to a further discussion.

PRO-

PROPOSITION V.

The National Church of this country is not essential to its civil constitution; which would be equally safe in the hands of the Protestant Dissenters, or of the Catholics.

AS the contrary persuasion is the key stone of the present system, whereby the country is deprived of the services of many of its citizens, and these citizens are excluded from the enjoyment of rights, to which all good subjects, it seems, may pretend, its discussion becomes important, and it may lead to the adoption of a more liberal and beneficial plan. If my judgment misguides me, it is not on a narrow track, though such often are the ways which conduct to the temple of Truth.

1. — To describe the slow process by which our civil constitution has been formed, would be a complicated labour. Hardly can it be said when the foundation stone was laid. But we view, in the different periods of our history, the noble fabric rising, and the hand of freedom doing and undoing, as the rights of the people prevailed or were oppressed:

Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.

Theorists, too sanguine and precipitate, fancy they can discover strong features, when, in truth,
it

it is but a sketch barely visible. There could be no liberty, as long as the feudal system endured, and so deeply had it rooted, that, in the lapse of centuries, it was not removed. At this day there are remains. But this enquiry is foreign : Suffice it, that our ancestors were long employed in the work ; and that the *Revolution* finally completed it. It balanced the three estates of king, lords, and commons, securing the rights of the people, and giving to the crown an honourable and fair prerogative. Such is the British constitution.

There was another fabric grew by its side, misshapen and misplaced, ignorantly despoiled of all its primitive beauty, and swollen to a gothic magnitude. I speak of the ecclesiastical establishment. How it rose, I have already said ; and its progress was visible, and it may be pronounced *contemporary* with the civil department. But was it likewise *essential* to it ?

If the assertion, at this time, be true, that *the church, as by law established, is an essential part of the constitution*, it was at all times so. For since the conquest, at least, there has not been a time, when a church did not exist, annexed to the state by the law of the land, or the solemn declarations of its monarchs. Their coronation oaths, and all the grants of general charters, attested it to the nation.

“ Know

“ Know, says the charter of Henry II. that I
 “ have granted and confirmed to God and the
 “ church all the customs, which my grandfather
 “ (Henry I.) did give and grant to her. Where-
 “ fore it is my will and I strictly enjoin, that holy
 “ church, and all earls, and barons, and all my
 “ vassals, have and hold freely, peaceably, and
 “ fully, all the customs, and grants, and liberties,
 “ to them and their heirs, which my grandfather
 “ &c.”—The first article of Magna Charta ordains;
 “ That the church of England shall be free, and
 “ enjoy her whole rights and liberties inviolable.”—
 I need go no further. Nothing can be more ex-
 press; and this was, in the twelfth and thirteenth
 centuries, the darkest days, as they are called, of
 popish ignorance. The *alliance between church and*
state was complete, and further laws, and the suc-
 cession of years still cemented the union. And
 what then was the language of Catholic churchmen
 and Catholic politicians? Precisely what it now is:
 That the ecclesiastical polity, (that is, *popish* prin-
 ciples and discipline) was conformable to the ge-
 nuous of the civil constitution; that they were
 formed on the same model, and might be likened
 to a double cone, united by the authority of the
 crown; that the preservation of the church was
 so essential to the state, that they must both stand
 and fall together. So they reasoned.

Three centuries after *Magna Charta*, came the *Reformation*. It dissolved the church polity in its principles and discipline; and the civil edifice stood uninjured. This could even coalesce with a new belief, and a new form of discipline, and move unimpaired through all their modes and variations; so independent and self-existent was it. — Contemplate the ecclesiastical revolutions in the reigns of Henry VIII. his son Edward, and his daughters, Mary, and Elizabeth; and say, if you can, that the alliance, of which I speak, was so indissoluble, that the ruin of the state must be the necessary consequence of the dissolution of the church establishment. By Henry it was dissolved; by Edward newly modified; by Mary restored; and by Elizabeth settled in its present form. — It was then to have been expected that we should hear no more of the imaginary phantom; but the illusion was to be perpetuated. Elizabeth, I have said, *new-settled* the church, fenced it with laws and ordinances, and again the same sounds were repeated; that *the national church was essential to the civil constitution*. Such an *essence* had not before been entered on the canons of philosophy. The civil constitution all along (the observation is important) was the same as it now is, possessing *magna charta*, and the *flamina* of the present form, only not so developed and defined.

Lives there a man so warped by prejudice, who will argue, that *Protestantism* is alone the religion that can fix this firm alliance, and that the preceding connection with *Catholicity* was a temporary union, hollow and inefficient, which a slight shock might break assunder, without danger to the state? When the present church establishment has existed as many centuries as that did, it will be time to discuss the question. — In the mean while, as an idea is often thrown out, that the legislatures of different kingdoms have now adopted such modes of religion, as are most conformable to the genius of their respective governments, it cannot be improper to examine it. For on this airy hypothesis it is asserted, that the religion of Rome is fitted to despotic states; presbyterianism to republics; and the episcopal form of this country to its mixed government, confessedly, it is added, the best that ever existed.

Religion then, it appears, is a mere engine of state, founded on no certain and divinely inspired documents, but variable in all its modes, as forms of government may require. The notion is ingenious.—But the general supposition is not true. The purest democracy is found in the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, and in Italy are catholic republics; and most unfortunately, indeed, for the system, no further distant than Scotland, is *presbyterianism*

itself *established*, and forming as much an essential union with the civil constitution of Britain, as does the *episcopal church* of this realm. May I be permitted another remark? — It was episcopacy in that country that opposed the new settlement at the *Revolution*, and was therefore, I believe, suppressed. Their allegiance to the present family only dates from the last year: it is only then, from the last year, that the *prelacy* of Scotland became friends to the Revolution, that is, friends to the civil constitution of the realm. It happens awkwardly that the episcopal order, *as such*, should be pronounced to be peculiarly adapted to our limited monarchy. It was not for this that James contended, nor was it this which his friends have admired.

What then is there in the character of the English church so well fitted to its civil constitution? — When the question comes thus worded, I am disposed to withhold no praise. I think it is admirably well adapted in all its parts; and if there must be a state church, I know of none that can be better chosen. Its conduct, since the Revolution, politically considered, has been uniformly steady, patriotic, and loyal; not meanly bowing to prerogative, nor factiously clamorous for liberty: In a word, such as might be expected from a prelacy, learned and exemplary; from a clergy, nurtured in those venerable mansions, where science, virtue, and the muses had, for ages, loved to dwell.

But

But I am not, I find, thus to be released: I am required to acknowledge a *peculiar* adaptation, even an *essential* connection. I cannot admit either. If there be a peculiar fitness, it is in its doctrine, in its morality, or in its discipline.—*Doctrine*, that is, revealed truths, is of a spiritual order, independent on, and unallied to, all human institutions.—Its *morality* is, I presume, common to the human race, which instruction has, at least, enlightened.—And what of *discipline*? It is a variable arrangement, alterable by time and place, and what in any church or sect easily conforms to requisitions, which may patronise or extend their interest. *Prelacy* I suspect, is meant to be its most signal feature: but that is not established in Scotland, and as it was there tolerated, it was disloyal. I look then for information on the head of the *peculiar fitness* of the English church to the civil government.

Now for the *essential connection*.—I have proved, I trust, that till the time of the *Reformation*, no such connection existed; and the same argument must, doubtless, apply to the succeeding period. Here, I own, we have laws and coronation oaths, establishing and securing the *Protestant* faith; but had we not also similar oaths, and laws, and the solemn pledge of charters, confirming the religion of a more ancient church? These did not make the union to the state *essential*, for it was severed from

it without injuring it ; by what means, then, shall those effect it? By his coronation oath, the king promises “ to maintain the Protestant religion, as “ by law established ; and to preserve to the “ bishops and clergy, and to the churches committed to their care, all such rights and privileges, as by law do, or shall, appertain to them “ or any of them.” And the act of *Uniformity*, 14th of Charles II. does most clearly secure to the church its exclusive immunities. It is unnecessary to specify the many other statutes made in its favour. But from all this, what more can be inferred, than that the Protestant religion, as here sanctioned by law, is the *established* religion of the country? That therefore it is an *essential* part of the civil constitution, is quite another question. The charters of Henry II. and of John, which I quoted, as full and as express as any posterior oaths or statutes, also *established* the Catholic religion. But the Catholic religion became not, for that, *essentially* united to the state. I have proved it. Why then shall the Protestant religion, *because* it has been established, acquire a further denomination? On any day, it may be severed from the state, as the Catholic religion was, and the civil constitution, to which it is annexed, will remain whole, uninjured, and unimpaired. If a double cone represent the union ; a separation may be made without danger to either. They will each have a base to stand on, and

and the crown may be more aptly fitted. That figure was incautiously chosen; for it is only by being overturned, that a double cone can be saved from falling.

At the *Revolution*, which is the period to which I principally look, the church acquired a confirmation of its former settlement, and was bound by a new tie to the constitution. But as much had been done for the Catholic church by *Magna Charta*, and other statutes. This point has been sufficiently examined.—The *preservation* of Protestantism was also due, it is added, to that event. I know not that it was. The design of king James, in granting toleration to Sectaries, was not, I believe, to overturn the national church. In a course of years, had the same plan been pursued by a race of dissenting kings, it might, perhaps, have happened. In either case, of its stability or fall, nothing could be more indifferent to a patriot king, and a patriot legislature, whose sole attention must ever be directed to the preservation and strength of the civil constitution. This only merits care, because only in the stability and welfare of this, is *every Briton* interested. I am thus brought to the second part of my Proposition.

2. *The civil constitution would be equally safe in the hands of the Protestant Dissenters.*—I mean not at all to insinuate, that a change of hands would be expedient

pedient ; because I have already said, that, if there must be an establishment, a better than what we have could not be chosen. But, I think, the general interest of religion, and the prosperity of the state, would be greatly promoted, did no such ecclesiastical form exist. I have given my reasons. That illusion it is my desire to weaken, whereby men are still led to imagine, that the character or principles of the English church, as by law established, are such, that no other could so well coalesce with the political government; and consequently that it must be secured even by an exclusion of Sectaries from the common rights of citizens. Did these possess them, without any restriction, the church, it is said, would be in danger, from their increasing influence in the state.

Let me then suppose that the *Protestant Dissenters* were in full possession of all the present rights of the establishment, which is to suppose; that the *episcopal* church were annihilated. On this supposition, it is my opinion, that the *civil constitution*, in all its parts, would remain as firmly based, as it is at the present moment. Why should it be otherwise? *They* principally contributed to make it what it is, at the Revolution; *they* admire it, even with a parental fondness; and it cannot be shewn that *they* admit a single opinion, either religious or civil, which would not tend to confirm, to uphold, to embellish it.—In the rage of innovation, it will be objected,

objected, they once overturned both church and state. They did so. But that was in the paroxysm of a fever, which can never return. There can again be no motive for it. I will likewise observe that, had not that tremendous crisis happened, possibly, the liberties and the limited monarchy we possess, had never been secured to us. But as this event is much insisted on, I will oppose to it another of very equal import. This gentle state church of ours, once also, overturned the constitution. I mean at the *Reformation*, when they annihilated the old establishment, which they are obliged to maintain, was then an *essential* part of the whole fabric.

If then the reins of government and the interests of the state might, with safety, be committed to the hands of the Protestant Dissenters, as I am positive they might; how partial and contracted must seem that policy, which restrains them from an equal participation of civil rights, unless they comply with ordinances, which to their consciences, they say, are not palatable.

3.—*The civil constitution would be equally safe in the hands of the Catholics.* — I have already shewn, that they hold no opinions, religious or political, inconsistent with its dearest interests. Whence then could any danger arise? Must they not feel themselves equally bound to maintain it inviolate,

as

as any Protestants do ; and would they not be equally disposed to do it ? What men admire, and in what they are interested, they will not be induced to sacrifice. Granted, that they value their religion. And what then ? Is there any tenet of their religion, any branch of their discipline ; with which the civil constitution might clash ? Again I assert it ; there is none.

In the various abuse that has been thrown out on Catholics, it seems never to recur to any one, that many valuable parts of the English constitution were framed by them. Such is *magna charta*, daily in the mouth of every one. From the the earliest periods of our history, till two hundred years ago, this constitution was in our hands, forming and improving ; and I could shew that, during the period, between the *Reformation* and the *Revolution*, it acquired little. The cry against the Stuarts always was, that they violated the constitution : a manifest proof, that the malcontents viewed it, as *performed*. — The English Catholics then who reared this constitution, at the great expence of their lives and fortunes, and who loved it in its unfinished state, shall they hate it and attempt its ruin, when it has acquired due form and stability ? Nor have I yet observed, in their favor, that *episcopacy*, on which great stress is laid, is an essential branch of their ecclesiastical œconomy. The presbyterians have not this to shew ; though they may point to Scotland for
a proof,

a proof, that loyalty can exist without it. However, if any thing in the character of *episcopacy* can be found, peculiarly adapted to the *alliance*, so often mentioned; ours, I trust, has as fair pretensions to urge, as that of any Protestant church.

From this view of the subject, which might still be enlarged, I think myself authorised to repeat my Proposition; *That the national church of this country is not essential to its civil constitution; which would be equally safe in the hands of the Protestant Dissenters, or of the Catholics.*

CONCLUSION.

THOUGH from the *Propositions* or premises I seem to myself to have established; "That
 " the Revolution, in 1688, was a general benefit
 " to all British subjects; that the benefits of the
 " Revolution should be communicated to all British
 " subjects; that the English Catholics hold no
 " principles or opinions, which should exclude them
 " from the benefits of the Revolution; that the
 " national church of this country is not essential to
 " its civil constitution, which would be equally
 " safe in the hands of the Protestant Dissenters, or
 " of the Catholics;" an inference, very full and
 explicit, might be drawn, I shall be more reserved
 and modest.

Many

Many years must elapse, before Christian nations will be induced to consider state religions, as a grievance which should be removed, and as a human device, which has disfigured the charming simplicity of the gospel. And so inveterate is the prepossession in their favour, supported, we know, by the interested combination of a multitude, that the man who shall only draw an hypothesis against them, will be pronounced a fit inhabitant for Utopia. In that region I look for my establishment.—It has been said, that a house built upon sand cannot stand; yet here we have a house built on *prejudices*, which has stood, and probably will stand long. Prejudices then do not form a sandy foundation: indeed, I am inclined to believe, that they gradually cement into a rock, against which the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat, in vain. In this country, probably, where the strength of Sectaries is great, and daily growing, a change will be effected: but it will only be a change from one establishment to another, as it happened at the Reformation. Let us then remain as we are; for a better establishment, as I have said, more consonant with the rights of the people, and the prerogative of the crown, England can never enjoy. I have not a wish to see my own religion again *established*; rather let it remain as it is, provided its professors enjoyed the civil rights of citizens. As it is, I am convinced, it possesses most of the original character of Christianity; and he that can desire to see that

again

again effaced by the wealth, the dignities, the pageantry of an establishment, let him not pretend to any sincerity of belief in the maxims of revelation.—Who would be pleased with the establishment of *Presbyterianism*, must have a sorry taste, indeed.—As our national church then is in quiet possession of its dignities and emoluments, there may they remain. They have laws to secure these, and subscriptions strong enough for an eternal barrier against all intrusion. Let even other mounds and palings be raised, such as once fenced paradise,

So thick entwined,
As one continu'd brake; the undergrowth
Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perplex'd
All path of man or beast that pass'd that way.

What then is the conclusion I wish to draw? It is this: that *all dissenters* from the national church are entitled to *every civil right* which that church enjoys. It immediately follows from the propositions I have endeavoured to establish: Nor can a single reason, which should weigh on the mind of a patriot or a citizen, be assigned for their exclusion. To talk of the security of the state worship is idle. What can be more secure?—But the constitution, which our ancestors formed, shall we dare to violate that, it is said, by the slightest innovation? Had this imposing argument been urged with efficacy, some ages back, where had been the boasted Reformation,

mation, and our glorious Revolution ; in a word, where had been the constitution itself? When Numa Pompilius settled the religion and polity of the Roman state, he had nightly colloquies, it was asserted, with the nymph Egeria, and the people were taught to reverence his laws, as the oracles of heaven. To hear some men speak, it should seem as if they believed in a similar co-operation ; that each attorney general has had an Egeria to whisper in his ear oracular decisions. I admit the great perfection of our system ; but I cannot think that the views of legislators were, at all times, wise ; much less that penal statutes and disabling clauses, either belong to the essence of the constitution, or may not be touched with impunity. Innovations are not lightly to be made ; but it would be well if, at stated periods, a solemn review were instituted of the magnificent plan ; and such retrenchments and additions made, as to the wisdom of Parliament might seem expedient. Whereas from a misjudged veneration, such as the antiquary entertains for a gothic ruin, excrescent members and superfetations are allowed to accumulate, till the beauty of the structure be disfigured and overwhelmed. On its front was originally engraved in golden characters, **SALUS POPULI SUPREMA LEX.** Are the words now clearly legible ? I refer to the state of the Protestant Dissenters, and of the Roman Catholics.

We

We ask for nothing but what is just and reasonable to be asked, and what is safe and honourable to be granted. The Protestant Dissenters ask to be relieved from laws, whereby the *Sacramental Test* is imposed as a qualification for *civil* and *military* offices. And this claim can be denied them!—I am as little disposed to controvert the wisdom of my ancestors as any man: but how they can be thought wise, who established so monstrous a paradox, that taking the sacrament should qualify for wearing his majesty's cockade, is truly incredible! Such a prostitution of holy things could hardly have occurred to a man, who distinguished between earth and heaven. The nymph Egeria, I will confidently say, would have suggested better counsels; and it is much, if the legislators grandmothers did not blush at the device. This liberty of censure may be freely taken with our ancestors; and it is known, besides, that the court of Charles II. was not celebrated for religious delicacy.—But, by no other means, it is said, could dissenters from the church have been detected. Are they detected by this? Let me ask. Burning ploughshares or boiling water would have been a more sure ordeal. However, what opinion soever we may form of the wisdom or caution of our ancestors, as the dissenters have proved themselves deserving of every indulgence, and can claim what they

they ask for as a *right*, I may presume, that it will not be long refused to them.

It may be thought extraordinary that I should plead for the Protestant Dissenters. The truth is : their case was so involved in my general argument, that I could not get clear from it. Besides, I am returning good for evil. They do not, indeed, stand in need of the little assistance I can give their cause ; nor do I know that they will thank me.

The state of the Catholics is peculiarly hard ; for though an *Act of Toleration* were granted, whereby the whole penal code against them should be repealed, their condition would but be *nominally* bettered. These laws, indeed, are severe, and many of them, like those of the Athenian Draco, written with blood ; but, for that reason, they are no longer executed. What really distresses them are the laws enjoining qualifying oaths, by which they must be for ever excluded from the common privileges of citizens. The oaths are that of *supremacy*, and the *declaration against Transubstantiation, and Popery*, and the *Sacramental Test*.—On what occasions these statutes were enacted, it is unnecessary to enquire. I am ready to grant, there was a jealousy of Catholics, in the reigns of Elizabeth and Charles II. which, in the estimation of a suspicious and irritated legislature, might then seem to call for such restrictive measures. That no cause for jealousy now subsists, every

every honest man must allow; and every man of common penetration must be well aware, that, in no future period, any causes can arise, against which it would be prudent to guard by any present provision. The conduct of Catholics, pronounced to be irreproachable, and their attachment to the state, must continue to improve, if there be room for it, and gain new vigour. But here lies the stress of difficulty. The oaths, of which I speak, though purposely made against Catholics, could not be carried into effect, without a general application. Therefore they were to be taken by Protestants; and I need not enumerate, on what occasions, they are taken. But *we* cannot be relieved without their repeal; for the experience of centuries has proved that our consciences will not bend to them; and yet to expect such an indulgence, in the present state of things, would be deemed unreasonable. There are many thinking Protestants who feel a reluctance in taking oaths, so irrelevant as those are; but the law must be complied with.

Much has lately been said on the bad effects, arising to the morals of the people, from an unnecessary multiplication of oaths; and it was hoped that the important matter would have been brought before the discussion of Parliament. When that shall take place, we flatter ourselves that the *oath of supremacy* and the *declarations*, will be candidly examined. Were a scrutiny into the history of these oaths and

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their

their present expediency once instituted, I have that confidence in the good sense and equity of my countrymen, that I dare pronounce, they would not survive another session. When the original motive for enacting laws subsists no longer, and they are found to oppress a meritorious body of citizens, shall they not be repealed ?

With regard to the *Tests* I have nothing to say. When the Protestant Dissenters have procured relief from them, then it will be our time to apply. Not that, in any instance, I conceive ourselves to be less deserving of notice than they are ; but because, as long as it shall seem expedient to the legislature not to listen to the claims of so powerful, so wealthy, and so useful a body, we, in silence, shall submit to the hard restraints. I speak as an individual.

Forlorn then is our condition. What can be done, I know not : but we shall persevere in the irreproachable conduct of citizens, attached to the state, and amenable to its laws, not doubting but that they whose ancestors treated us with severity, because to them we seemed to deserve it, will relax in their conduct and break the rod of iron, when humanity, justice, and good policy shall call for the measure. The period cannot be distant. France has set the example

The E N D.



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